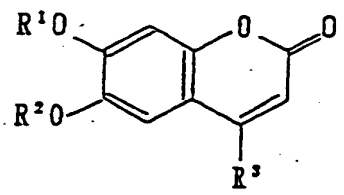
WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A controlled-release oral preparation comprising esculetin, its derivative shown by the formula (I),



(I)

[wherein R^1 and R^2 are individually a hydrogen atom or a saturated or unsaturated aliphatic acyl group having 2-25 carbon atoms or benzoyl group, and R^3 is a hydrogen atom, hydroxyl group, alkyl group, aryl group, or aralkyl group], or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof as an effective component.

2. The controlled-release oral preparation of esculetin according to claim 1, containing 0.5 to 90 wt% (hereinafter referred to as "%") of a gel-forming polymer base.

3. The controlled-release oral preparation of esculetin according to claim 2, wherein the gel-forming polymer base is hydroxypropylmethylcellulose.

4. The controlled-release oral preparation of esculetin according to claim 1, containing 0.5 to 50% of an enteric coating base.

5. The controlled-release oral preparation of esculetin according to claim 4, wherein the enteric coating base is hydroxypropylmethylcellulose acetate succinate, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose phthalate, cellulose acetate

phthalate, carboxymethylethylcellulose, or methacrylic acid copolymer.

6. The controlled-release oral preparation of esculetin according to claim 1, containing 0.5 to 50% of an insoluble coating base.

7. The controlled-release oral preparation of esculetin according to claim 6, wherein the insoluble coating base is ethylcellulose.

8. The controlled-release oral preparation of esculetin according to claim 6, comprising 0.5 to 90% of a gel-forming polymer base, and 0.5 to 50% of an enteric coating base and/or 0.5 to 50% of an insoluble coating base.

9. The controlled-release oral preparation of esculetin according to any one of claims 1-8, of which the release of esculetin or its derivative is controlled so that the concentration of glucuronic acid conjugates in plasma is maintained at 0.5 μmol/L or more for a period of 10 hours or more after administration when the preparation is orally administered to a beagle dog at a dose of 1-100 mg/kg.

10. The controlled-release oral preparation of esculetin according to any one of claims 1-8, of which the release of esculetin is controlled so that the period of time required for the preparation to dissolve 80% of esculetin is 0.5 to 23 hours as determined by the dissolution test according to the Japanese Pharmacopoeia (paddle method).